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GOD'S PURPOSES IN THE WAR.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT CALDWELL, N. J.,

ON THE DAY OF

NATIONAL THANKSGIVING,

AUGUST 6, 1863.

BY REV. I. N. SPRAGUE,  
(PASTOR.)

NEWARK, N. J.:

PRINTED AT THE DAILY ADVERTISER OFFICE.

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CALDWELL, Aug. 10, 1863.

REV. I. N. SPRAGUE,

*Dear Sir:*

Believing that the publication of the sermon delivered by you on the day of National Thanksgiving will be productive of public good, we respectfully ask a copy of the same for publication.

Truly Yours,

LEWIS C. GROVER,  
ZENAS C. CRANE,  
JAMES ORTON,  
RUFUS F. HARRISON,  
STEPHEN PERSONETT,  
EDWIN R. DILLINGHAM.



LEWIS C. GROVER, Esq., AND OTHERS,

*Gentlemen:*

The sermon was written with no other object than of being useful to my own people. You are welcome to make it public if you think it will be of any service to the interests of our common country.

Yours, &c.,

I. N. SPRAGUE.



## S E R M O N .

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That men may know that Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.—PSALM lxxxviii: 18.

ON days appointed by our rulers, as occasions of thanksgiving and praise, or of fasting and prayer, long-established custom has allowed ministers a large liberty of speech. On such occasions they have been permitted and even expected to choose their themes from a wide range of subjects—to lay aside ordinary gospel themes, and launch out into fields secular and worldly, moral, social, scientific, national or governmental. It is commonly expected of them that they will then take up some popular topic of the day—some aspect of national or governmental affairs, and that they will give whatever subject is thus selected, a fair and honest and Christian discussion, not in the light of party politics, but in the light of Bible truth.

While custom has given this latitude to the pulpit, every right-minded minister will exercise a wise discretion, and have due regard to the principles of propriety and usefulness, in marking out the line of his duty. The apostle said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." A minister is not *bound* to do all things that he may *have a right* to do. There are some governmental themes, some purely worldly questions, entering into the strife of political parties often, which clearly may not lie, at all, in the line of a minister's duty to discuss; but there are others which involve so much of the principles of morality and religion, of duty to

God and duty to man, that no minister can be silent on them and be faithful to his ordination vows. In the consecration to his sacred office, every minister is solemnly sworn "to declare the whole counsel of God," according to his best judgment, "whether men will hear or forbear." Should a minister feel it his duty to preach on any topic of national affairs, there is one consideration that should give him a wise discretion in the exercise of prudence and piety. When a man is elected President of these United States, the moment he takes his seat in the executive chair, he becomes a national and should cease to be a party man, for he becomes then the President of both parties, and should have a supreme regard to the interest, not of his own party, but of the whole nation. So in every Christian congregation, there are persons of different political sentiments, whose views and feelings are entitled to respect, in the public services of the sanctuary; and however strongly a minister may hold his own political views, it would be a manifest breach of Christian propriety and courtesy for him to take advantage of his public position for the purpose of pulling down one party and building up another. He is bound to preach *the truth and the whole truth*, without regard to any party, remembering that he is the minister of both parties and anxious to do good to all. I do not say that even such a ministry, exercised on this principle, will pass along, in times like these, without being found fault with, by what the apostle terms "unreasonable men,"—men who always demand silence on all topics that are disagreeable to them; but I do say, that such a ministry will be acceptable to God and profitable to men, for it is the only ministry which is faithful and true, dividing to every man a portion in due season, neither radical on the one hand, nor time-serving on the other.

I claim, also, that the views of ministers, respecting the moral and social and religious aspect of our national affairs,



are entitled to respect and a fair consideration on the part of the people, for two reasons :

1. *They are good men.* Make liberal exceptions in individual cases, and it has been conceded on all hands that the world has never seen a better class of men than the Protestant ministry of the present age—pious, honest, self-denying, laborious, and devoted especially to their great work of advancing civilization and saving the souls of men. Highly learned, clear headed and honest minded, they possess the qualities, and are in the fairest position, to take large, clear and right views of all subjects in connection with the great principles of religious morality. If I should find myself disagreeing with such a body of men on moral subjects, I should seriously begin to question whether I was not wrong.

2. *These ministers look over the affairs of the world from an elevated stand-point.* Party men, of both sides, are now looking at the affairs of the country from their political platforms, and of course everything appears to wear a peculiar tinge from the positions they occupy. But I verily believe that the great body of the Christian ministry are looking forth from a *higher position* than any political platform. They take their stand upon the Bible and upon its great revealed principles of truth and righteousness. They measure the length and breadth of every moral question, by the unerring standard of God's holy Word. Is it in accordance with that Word ; then it is right ! Is it contrary to that Word ; then it is wrong ! This is the verdict of God's true ministers the world over, and must be to the end of time.

Now look at these facts in connection with still another, *the wonderful harmony that exists among the great body of ministers of every denomination, at this moment*, as to the moral questions involved in the present posture of our national affairs. They are not all of one political party. On many things, like other men, they have party views and preferences ; but if you

note the utterances of Presbyteries, Synods, Assemblies, Conferences, Conventions, and even missionary meetings, you will hear, substantially, but one voice, evincing a most wonderful agreement on the great moral questions and fundamental principles connected with our present national condition.

In the present struggle for our national life, *we are truly a spectacle to the world*. Political France and political and aristocratic England, both governed by the principle of a supreme worldly selfishness, are looking upon our struggle, with a greedy desire that it may eventuate in the final separation of North and South, and the breaking up of our free institutions. In all of their actions towards us, all questions of right and wrong they throw to the winds, and, in obedience to the principle of brute force—*that might is right*, they will gather from our misfortunes all the advantages they can. But the Christian ministry of those countries have taken their stand upon a higher platform, and, in spite of opposing political influences at home, they have done one of the noblest deeds of Christian brotherhood and sympathy, which the world has ever seen. They did not offer us their material aid, for that we did not need; but they have given us what is better, their prayers, their sympathy, and their brotherly assurance of a GOD-SPEED, in our struggle for life and liberty. While political France was plotting for our ruin, 750 ministers in that empire have drawn up an address, embodying their views on our national affairs; and they have carried over that address to their English brethren, calling upon them to unite with them in expressing approbation and sympathy for the North, in waging war for the suppression of rebellion. And while English policy is furnishing ships and munitions of war for our enemies, a similar address has been prepared and signed by more than 4,000 of *her* ministers, and that address has just been brought to this country by a delegation of two able men, appointed especially for that purpose; and here in our great metropolis, that address has been received by a

meeting of ministers composed of all denominations; a suitable response, embodying the same sentiments, has been prepared and published, signed by Dr. Vinton, Episcopal, as Chairman, and Mr. Duryea, of the Collegiate Dutch Church, as Secretary, calling upon all the ministers of the land to send in their names, if they wish them appended to that response; the number that *have come in and will come in*, will only be counted by thousands. This embodying of the views and sentiments of so many ministers, in Europe and America, on the great moral and political questions involved in our national controversy, originating where it did, so harmonious, scriptural and loyal, is a wonderful thing in this wonderful age.

I have said that ministers are not all of one political creed; far from it. While they may hold different views in reference to the minor things involved in our national controversy, in the great and important matters they are substantially agreed. In passing the noble and patriotic resolutions of our late General Assembly there was not one negative vote, and yet to my certain knowledge there were men there of opposite political creeds. Among ministers, there may be different views of the *mint, anise and cummin*, while there is one view of the *judgment, faith and mercy*. The agreement of ministers on our national affairs, is in reference to great fundamental principles; and recent declarations of different ecclesiastical bodies show a very remarkable unanimity on the following points:

1. On the wicked and causeless character of the rebellion.
2. On the right and duty of subduing it by force of arms, to preserve the integrity and union and constitution of the government.
3. The wickedness and impolicy of human bondage, as against the principles of the Bible, and as the primary cause of all our national troubles.

4. The apostacy and blindness of Southern ministers and Christians;—apostacy from the principles announced to the world in our Declaration of Independence, from the great law of Christian love and equal rights, and from the declared opinions of even the Southern Church thirty years ago;—blindness at the idea that the great system of human wrong, which they have made the corner-stone of their new government, can be at all sustained by the principles of Bible truth, or agreeable to the civilization of the age. And

5. As to a supreme divine agency in this whole matter of our national troubles, permitting them for the punishment of our sins and yet overruling them for our ultimate good as a nation.

Now I claim, that this unanimity of sentiment among Christian ministers is entitled to a fair and respectful consideration on the part of the people. I hold that such a body of men, so large, so learned, so sincerely pious, so unselfish, looking forth from the platform of Bible principles, and so raised above the fogs of the political atmosphere, are not likely to be mistaken; and I expect to see in the future providences of God *a logic of events*, that will be a clear vindication of the *justness of these views*.

This harmony of opinion and action among ministers on the vital questions, connected with our national life and prosperity, I commend to the people as worthy of their admiration and imitation. I suppose there is no question but that the great body of the people of the North, of both political parties, are truly and essentially loyal, and intending to give their hearty support in sustaining the government, the constitution, and the free institutions of the country; and would they consent to lay aside their petty differences for the time, and act in vigorous harmony, while the assassin is at the throat of the nation, the affairs of the country would be placed in a far more promising condition.

That there are some traitors abroad, mingled in and concealed among the loyal masses, I suppose no one questions,—men, whose real sympathies and hearts are at the South, and whose bodies ought to be there,—who shout for Jeff. Davis and the Southern Confederacy,—who glory over Federal defeats and Confederate victories,—who show their leaning, by withholding delicacies from a wounded Union soldier, and imparting them with much glee to a wounded rebel,—who clamor for free speech and then use their privilege only to abuse and vilify and oppose the government,—who would be guides to any Confederate raid, and help them rob and pillage and murder their loyal neighbors. We have too much proof that there are such men at the North, concealed under the garb of a professed loyalty, and yet seeking every opportunity to work into the enemy's hands. A Southern Confederate I can respect; sincere and honest, though mistaken, yet identified with the South by kindred and residence, I can respect him. But a traitor of Northern blood no man can respect. Even the Confederates themselves, after they have received all the aid he can give, spurn him contemptuously, as the meanest specimen of humanity. Such a man's name will be surely embalmed, but it will be embalmed, like that of Benedict Arnold, in the odor of infamy.

But of the great masses of the people of the loyal States, I suppose it may be said that they are far more agreed on the one great question of our national and governmental life, than any one may imagine, from the numerous conflicting political views that are floating so freely in the community. I have frequently seen this matter tested and proved, in individual cases, to my perfect satisfaction. Two neighbors meet. They stand on different political platforms—they are *antipodes* in their political position. If their conversation is about the *mint, anise and cummin* of our national affairs, they will disagree, and the more they talk the wider perhaps will they be



apart; but if they talk about the vital principles of our national life, they are in harmony. They hold different opinions as to the propriety of arbitrary arrests, the policy of emancipation, the expediency of conscription and other points, on which loyal men may not agree; but touch them on the subject of sustaining law and order and government, and putting down rebellion and riots by the strong arm of power, of taking strong measures to prevent the disintegration of a Constitutional Union by the heresy of secession, and they are not so far apart as you imagine. Let loyal men of different political creeds bring out the points on which they agree, and these points are far more important than those on which they differ.

Thus I have given you a long introduction to my thanksgiving address; but thus much I wished to say, hoping that it would be well received by those who hold different views, and believing that if thus received, it would do good. In such times as these, we are apt to be in a state of feverish excitement, too easily yielding ourselves to impulsive feelings and movements, when we specially need the soothing influence of a calm judgment and an unprejudiced mind. It is said to be *the little foxes that spoil the vines*, by working among the tender grapes; guard against these, and then we shall have the more strength and union to fight against the more formidable enemy. When a man's house is on fire, it is folly for the neighbors to stand around idly and angrily discuss the question, who set it on fire? Let them go first vigorously to work to put out the fire, and then find out and punish the guilty party. I like the remark of one among us, in politics opposed to the present administration; said he, "I am going to do all I can to help the government out of this trouble, and then I am going to call them to an account."

I have said that the great body of ministers, and I may include with them the great body of professed christians, are united in the belief, *that God is in this war—that He permitted it*

*when He might have prevented it—that He has His special reasons for this Divine permission, and that it is His purpose to overrule it for His own glory and the interests of religion and humanity.*

Two things, I think, must be granted by us all—1. *That God is a wise and holy sovereign* ; He never does any thing foolish or wrong—that however mysterious His workings are to men, they always turn out well, when the end is reached—that while He gives to none of us an account of any of His matters, we *all* have reason to confide in Him, as too wise to make any mistake, and too good to do any thing wrong ; and 2. *In the past history of the world, He has made use of wars as a very common means of accomplishing His purposes.* In very many cases we see the Divine hand, and trace the evident connexion between these terrible conflicts of depraved human passions, and the great and good results that were made to follow. Witness the war of the Romans against the Jews, resulting in the breaking up of the Jewish establishment, and the publishing of the true religion to the Gentile world ;—our own war in the Revolution, creating a new nation and a new government, in advance of all others in the great principles of human liberty and christian civilization. Wars have been sometimes necessary to break the fetters of long established systems of tyranny, to give freedom and scope to the mind in working out new and improved forms of government and civilization. We have no reason to suppose that the war now raging in our country, the most terrible scourge and evil that we have ever seen, will prove an exception to the general rule of God's sovereignty, as manifested in His Word and Providence. God evidently has His purposes in this war, and His purposes may be very different from ours. The purpose of Joseph's brethren, in selling him into Egypt, was very different from God's purpose in permitting him to be sold. The purpose of the Jews in crucifying Christ, was very different from God's purpose in permitting him to be crucified. The purpose

of a proud Eastern king, in making war against the Jews, was to extend his empire and add to his worldly glory ; but God's purpose, in permitting that war, was to use that king as a rod of chastisement against His people, and humble them for their sins. *Our* purpose, in carrying on this present war, is to preserve the government, sustain the constitution and restore the Union, as it was established by our fathers. God's purpose may be very different. He may care very little for *our* purpose, but He will never lose sight of His own. We may be doomed to a sad disappointment in relation to our purposes, but God's purposes will most surely be accomplished. The Union, the Constitution and the Government, which we esteem so highly, and for which we are willing to make such great sacrifices, God may not think so much of ; indeed, He may see fit to set them all aside, and allow us to be broken up, that He may break up established forms of evil and bring out something new and better. In moments of unbelief, when I look on the human side, I am filled with fear and dismay and apprehension ; but when I have faith in God, in His character and wisdom and overruling providence, then I am strengthened, because I can see His purpose to make all things work together for good. Whether my purpose is accomplished or not, I am sure that God's will be, and His purpose is wiser and better than mine. The Lord reigns : He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder He restrains : let us rejoice in and submit to His wise and holy sovereignty.

In human events there is sometimes a foreshadowing of the Divine purposes. The Psalmist says—*The meek will He guide in judgment ; the meek will He teach his way.* If we are meek and humble and submissive and pious, watching God's hand in the movements of His providence, I think we can learn something of what are the Divine intentions and purposes. If we are anxious to *do* His will, we shall be likely to *know* His will. Of course no one can tell what shall be on the morrow



—no one can calculate that *his* views respecting the Divine purposes are certainly the right views. But providences, as they come along, do unfold the will and purposes of God; and from what we know of the past and see of the present, we can sometimes get a foreshadowing of future events. And it seems to me, that in our present condition, there are some *data*, some positive facts in providence and some evident principles at work, by which we can, at least, form some probable conjecture of what are the Divine purposes respecting us as a nation in the issues of this war. These *data*, which I think we can make the basis of our reasoning in forming our judgment, consist of the three following things:

1. The known principles of God's Word, the revealed precepts of righteousness and truth, in accordance with which God always acts in His dealings with men and nations. *Righteousness exalleth a nation*, and brings prosperity in the Divine blessing; *but sin is a reproach to any people*, and incurs the Divine displeasure and punishment.

2. The principles evidently at work in our national affairs—the vital principle of a free government with the power resting in the people, in opposition to the Divine right of kings and the usurpation of privileged classes;—the principle of a man's ownership of himself and possessing a free personal responsibility, or of being a serf, a mere chattel at the disposal of another.

3. The leadings of God's providence in connexion with our national affairs—what things He is forcing upon the public attention—about what particular points He is concentrating public interest—where is the particular battle-field on which the conflicting moral forces are at work—what are the questions of right and wrong, of truth and righteousness, which are prominently in debate, which *will* come up, notwithstanding every effort to put them down.

These are the *data*—these are the things for us, as a nation,

to consider and study. They *must* be looked at—they will not be put aside—they will come up, it is impossible to avoid them—they appear in every phase of our national affairs; if you *lay* them in one form, like the ghosts of Macbeth, they will come up in another. It is coming to be an admitted point, that these principles embody our national destiny—that under God's hand they will issue in our ruin or salvation, just as we work them. If we adopt these principles of God's Word, of righteous government, of just and equal privileges in a common manhood, then we insure our national life and prosperity, because we secure the Divine approbation and blessing. If we disregard these principles and give ourselves over to the dominion of self-will and a worldly self-interest, then I apprehend we shall be swept away with the besom of destruction, just as God for the same reasons swept away the mighty cities and kingdoms of ancient times.

I hold that we are a religious nation. We acknowledge the true God. We adopt His word as our highest law. I expect we are going to act as a religious nation, and I expect, as we do this, that God will open a way for us through our sea of difficulties, and bring us into a large place, improved by our discipline, and destined, probably, to stand in a higher position than ever before. I should not wonder if God means to accomplish, by means of this war, some great and good objects, by a quick process, which it would have taken scores of years to accomplish in the ordinary course of events. In this matter the light is only just beginning to break in upon us, but as we progress that light will become clearer and stronger. Already the enquiry is raised, *Watchman, what of the night?* and already the answer is heard, *The morning cometh.*

If we are to succeed in this war, judging from the known Divine principles already announced, I am inclined to think that God intends to accomplish the following objects by means of the war, and if so, it is fair to presume that He will not let

the war cease till there is a providential certainty that they will be accomplished :

1. *He means to let this nation know that He reigns.* While we have been, virtually, a religious nation, we have made no national religious profession. He is not acknowledged, as He should be, in our constitution ; there is not a clear and distinct and humble acknowledgment of Him in many of our national acts. Our legislation has often been on the principle of a mere worldly policy, and not in accordance with the revealed precepts of truth and righteousness. These matters have gone on and God has winked at them, as He did at the sins of good men in olden times ; but He has now taken them in hand and is bringing Himself up to view as the supreme ruler. In His dealings with men and nations, he does certain things that they may know that he is **JEHOVAH**, and the **MOST HIGH** over all the earth. He is now making just such a revelation of Himself to this nation. We thought we were strong and mighty, and we were inviting other nations to see and admire our greatness, and God is just letting us see how terribly He can shake us by touching us with His little finger. Before He gets through with us, I apprehend that he will compel from us such an acknowledgment of His being and justice and government, as we have never yet made. We are fast coming into that position, as His hand is stretched out over us in anger.

2. *He is terribly rebuking us and punishing us for our sins.* Hitherto we have prospered and lived in peace in spite of our sins, and He has borne with us and held back His chastising rod ; but there is a limit even to the Divine forbearance. If we, as a nation, had conducted our affairs on the principles of truth and righteousness, the evil of this war would never have come upon us ; but now for our sins God has come out against us in judgment. With one hand He is lifting the rod over us, and with the other He is pointing us to our sins and letting us see that they are legion. "Look," says He, "at your pride, your extravagance, your worldliness, your worship of mam-

mon, your irreligion and profanity ; look at your decay of the virtue of patriotism, your demagogueism, your bitter, hateful party spirit, your wrongs to the Indian, and your greater wrongs to the African." "*Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord?*" It was in view of the oppressive power of the strong over the weak, in wringing toil from sable hands without wages, and degrading the image of God to a beastly chattel, that Jefferson, that wise and noble statesman, has left the following memorable words recorded in his Notes on Virginia, "I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever." The very time he foresaw has now come. God's justice has waked up. *Our iniquity has found us out*, and He is dealing with us for it. He is smiting us with blow upon blow, and His smittings will either break us or bend us. In these very smittings I can gather a ray of hope for the future. They are a token of His remembrance of us and of His interest in us. He wounds that He may heal. If we penitently accept the punishment of our iniquities, then He will turn and remember His covenant with us. We are just now in such a condition, and God is dealing with us in such a manner, that we ought to be like the men of Nineveh, when Jonah entered that wicked city and began to cry in the name of the Lord, "Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." From the king downward every man began to search for his sins and put on sackcloth and humbled himself, to avert the threatened judgments of God. So should we do as a people. Our sins, social, political and personal, have drawn down upon us the Divine curse, and are threatening our ruin. *In the times of our ignorance God winked at these sins, but He now commands all men every where to repent.* The time has come, when our refusal to see our sins and to turn from them will prove our destruction. I have sometimes feared that we have gone too far already in our impiety as a nation, and in our disregard of the righteous principles of that *higher law*, of which God Himself is the executive power, and in comparison



with which all our human laws are as nothing. Certain I am that our only hope is in God. If we take such a position, that He turns His anger away from us and leaves us His blessing, then we are saved, and that position I think we shall take, and are now taking, under the leadings of His providence. Let it be our desire and our prayer that such may be our position.

3. *It may be a part of the Divine purpose connected with this war, to rekindle and revive that true spirit of patriotism, which originated this government, and which is indispensable to preserve it.* Ours is a government of the people. Every voter is a sovereign, in the sense that he assists by his own chosen representatives, in shaping the government and in making and executing the laws. To preserve such a government, to hinder it from becoming the tool of intriguing political demagogues, there must be kept alive in the hearts of the great masses of the people, a true spirit of patriotism, which our fathers had when they framed the government, and which gave up every thing, interests, preferences and party feeling for the sake of the country.

In this genuine feeling of true patriotism there has been a great decay in the land, and in the place of it there has sprung up a spirit of partyism, the tendency of which is always to lose sight of the government in the stronger attachment to a particular party. Against this great danger Washington warned the country in his Farewell Address. He says, "That to a popular form of government like ours, this spirit is its worst enemy; that it is in itself a frightful despotism and that it leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism; that the disorders and miseries which result, incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; that sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own

elevation on the ruins of public liberty ; it serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble public administration ; it agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms ; foment occasionally riot and insurrection." Such are the words of warning left by him, who is styled by all the "Father of his Country." Into that very error of an overheated spirit of partyism have we fallen, and while it shows our defection from the true feeling of patriotism, it threatens to be the ruin of our free government. A man must now follow the file leader of his party ; in the language of political parlance, "he digs his grave," if he dares to vote even for a good man out of his party ; and some are so blinded as to imagine that partyism is only one form of patriotism.

What is patriotism ? It is a whole-hearted love of country, preferring *its* welfare to any thing and all things else. It is not party or section, or even preference ; it is country. It is a whole-souled loyalty, yielding every thing for the good of the whole. It is much more than allegiance. Allegiance is a cold, passive obedience to law, a kind of reluctant refraining from disobedience ; but patriotism is an active, out-spoken love of country, always willing to lay precious things on that country's altar. You can swear a man into allegiance, but you can't swear him into patriotism. Allegiance is compelled ; but patriotism is voluntary ; the one you must watch to see if it does not break over bounds ; the other is all the time watching for the good of the country ; allegiance will do nothing ; but patriotism acts on the principle that ceaseless vigilance and activity are the price of liberty. Other forms of government can be sustained by allegiance, but ours by the spirit of patriotism only.

In the beginning of this century, patriotism began to decline and mere allegiance began to take its place, and even that allegiance has degenerated, till it has become a bitter party spirit, that is always in danger of sacrificing country to faction.

The events and discussions of these times are opening our eyes to these evils, and letting us see that in the decay of patriotism, we are, like Sampson shorn of his locks, losing both our beauty and our strength. If it is the Lord's intention, as we may hope, to bring to the surface once more that true and genuine love of country, that is above all parties; that regards the existing administration as *the* government for the time being, without regard to any party—the government, whose acts and measures must be sustained, because they are *of* the government, then I can see that we can come out of our fiery trial purified as gold.

4. *I have an idea also, that God intends, out of the disorder and confusion of the past and present, to work an entire reconstruction in our social system, that in all parts of the country we may be a homogeneous people.* The terms North and South among us have become very significant terms—significant, not more of difference in locality, than difference in habits, manners, customs, employments, sympathies and character. And when I consider the many points of this difference and their influence, I do not wonder that the North and South have failed to live in harmony. Nor do I believe that they *can* live in harmony in the same government, unless they become more homogeneous in their civil and social state; and all the indications of providence are that God intends to work out homogeneousness from the existing disturbances. I do not allude here to the mere fact of slavery only, but to other things, things that have not been so generally known and understood. Let us look at some of these things by way of contrast in the two sections of our country.

Nothing strikes a Southerner with more surprise in first traveling over the North, than to see our dense population and the comparatively equal distribution of the land among that population, almost every man living in his own house and owning the ground which he cultivates. We are so accus-

tomed to this feature of our social state, that we do not duly consider and estimate its immense advantages over a different state.

At the South there is not this equal distribution of the land into homesteads, owned by the great body of the people. *There*, is a system of large land ownerships, one man owning thousands of acres, and of course lording it over all that live on those acres; while, perhaps, nine out of ten own not a single rod. This system of large landed proprietors has been the curse of every country where it has existed. The Irish and the Germans among us can tell us how it has worked in their "fatherland," raising the rich into a proud, overbearing aristocracy, and binding down the poor to a state of hopeless poverty, shutting them out from the privileges of education, and oppressing them with a heavy burden of rents and taxes. In the Jewish economy God made express provision against this evil of large land ownerships. Every fiftieth year was to be a year of Jubilee. In that year not only was every bondman to go out free, but every piece of land sold was to revert to the family of its original owner. No land could be bought out of any family with a perpetual title—the purchase could only run to the year of redemption; then it must go back to the family which originally held it; and however low the family might have been reduced, this reversion of land brought them up again. This Divine arrangement preserved equality; it effectually prevented the existence of large, oppressive land ownerships. The comparatively equal distribution of land among the great body of the people is one of the richest blessings of the North, and the want of it is one of the greatest calamities of the South. I should not wonder if God intends to break up this Southern system of lordly ownership, and divide out *among* all, the land which he created *for* all.

At the North labor is honorable, and industry a virtue. He that said, *six days shalt thou labor*, has so arranged matters as



to make that labor a necessity for our comfort and happiness. Every branch of lawful industry among us is regarded as an honorable calling. Where all feel the necessity and the obligation to work, no one is despised for being a working man.

At the South it is totally different. *There* there is only one class that works, and that the class held in bondage, and who are owned and sold and driven and beaten like our horses. There the white man that works is despised, because by thus working he is considered as bringing himself down to the level of the negro in the social scale. Hence labor among the whites is disreputable, and hence the great body of the whites are trying to live without labor. Of course this can be done by the 300,000 men who own their labor; but what is the condition of the rest of the population? Suppose in all the Southern States there are 4,000,000 of colored laborers belonging to less than half a million of owners; then there are besides between five and six millions of whites, who are to have a living somehow in food and clothing and shelter. They own no slaves to work for them; as a general thing they own no land; they consider it disreputable to work, and acting on the principle of doing just as little as they can and live, is it strange that immense numbers of them have got the name of "poor whites," and that the negroes themselves call them "poor white trash," and that these names significantly point out their exact social position? They call us "mud sills," because we work for a living, and "hirelings," because we work in the employ of others, and "white slaves," because our labor is performed so many hours to the day and under the inspection of master workmen; but they regard themselves as honorable, because they are in no man's employ, and live in the dignified leisure of stealing and hunting and keeping and training hounds to be put in chase of poor runaways. It is one of the worst features of the Southern social system, that it has this degrading influence on the poorer classes of the

whites. It puts them and keeps them in a state of terrible bondage and degradation, by causing them to despise that course of honest and industrious labor, which God has made honorable by enjoining it on all as a duty. Whatever God may please to do with the slaves, I should not wonder if He intends to liberate these poor whites, and so overturn the state of society as to bring them out of their degradation and raise them to the dignity of an honest industry.

I might present the same contrast between the North and South on the subject of general education; *here* almost universal, *there* very partial and limited. *Here* knowledge is one of the grand fruits of our social equality; *there* ignorance is the result of their social inequality. *Here* the school house springs up in every neighborhood; *there*, with their present social system, they never can have the successful working of our common schools. *Our* social system invites knowledge; *theirs* shuts it out. The great mass of the Southern mind is enveloped in darkness, and God is making a mighty overturning to let in the light, and when He says, "Let there be light," there will be light.

5. *I think, also, that the providences of God in this war are giving to us some clear foreshadowings of what He intends to do with the vexed question of slavery.* It has always been to us a subject of tangled difficulties. It has been a Gordian knot that no man could untie. The wisest of our statesmen have not known what to do with it. Congress has fought over it; almost every branch of the church has fought over it, and now the nation has got to fighting over it. We have puzzled our brains and exhausted our wits over it in vain. We have tried to let it alone, and we have been calling to each other to let it alone, and yet it would come up more and more like the plague of frogs in Egypt. When a matter is so persistently put forward, notwithstanding every effort to keep it down, I am accustomed somehow to feel that the hand of the Lord is

in it. There is every providential indication that the Lord has now taken this long-perplexing and difficult subject into His own hand, and we wait to see what disposal He will make of it. Alex. Stephens, now Vice President of the Southern Confederacy, in a speech he once made against secession, declared "that if we had war, it would break up their institution of slavery;" and it now looks very much as if his words were going to prove a true prophecy. As God has evidently taken this matter into His own hands, I am willing to leave it there for the unfoldings of His will in providence.

*It is very certain that passing events are rapidly working a great change in public opinion with regard to the colored race.* They have been among us, but they are not of us. Their natural home is in another section of the globe, and among us they are not in their natural position. But this is no reason why we should deny them a common brotherhood with us, when God has told us *that He has made of one blood all the nations of men*; no reason why we should despise and ill-treat them, because God has given them *a skin not colored like our own*. They are the weak, and God always sympathizes with the weak to avenge their wrongs; they are strangers, and God has commanded us specially to be kind to the stranger. The Irish made a grand mistake in their recent murderous assault upon this dependent, defenceless class—an assault that will react to their own great detriment, and call out a special sympathy for the oppressed. Such a course of persecution will most assuredly cause the Irishman to sink and the colored man to rise.

It is singular how the progress of events in this war is rapidly overturning all our pre-conceived ideas about the colored race and placing them in an entirely new attitude before the world—making them the subjects of a deep public interest notwithstanding all our efforts to the contrary, and weaving their welfare into the very web of our national life. Respect-

ing their character and their course, different and opposite opinions were entertained in the event of a war between the North and South ; and yet how completely have these opinions been upset, and we stand confounded and corrected by the development of events ! When we saw the storm gathering, we all thought that when it burst, the slaves would take advantage of it and show themselves a savage and brutal race, rising in insurrections and committing such horrid butcheries of women and children as to deluge cities and plantations with blood, and how we all shuddered at the bare possibility of such atrocities ! The war has now continued over two years, and not one single insurrection has occurred, not one single family has been butchered by their servants. As a class they have showed themselves more civilized and humane than we thought.

Some even took the opposite extreme, "that the slaves were so contented with their condition and loved their masters so well, that they would never leave them, but fight for them," and yet, as a general thing, no sooner has the Federal army appeared in sight than they have literally left all and fled, showing that they had the same love of liberty as other men ; and Southern editors have made sad lamentations over all this, as evincing the basest ingratitude on the part of their servants toward their kind and indulgent masters.

It was said also by the ultra abolitionist of the John Brown order, "Only begin the war and the whole body of the slaves will at once leap to arms and carry it on ;" and yet this sentiment has been belied in the fact that the slaves have quietly continued in their usual employments till, in the approach of our armies, they could obtain their freedom by fleeing and not fighting.

In each of these particulars, the negro has evinced noble traits of genuine humanity, showing his freedom from that savage, brutal nature which we have been so ready to ascribe



to him. I question whether he has not acted with much more forbearance and generosity than any race of white men would have done under the same circumstances.

When the question was first mooted about incorporating the negro into the army, and letting him bear his share in the hardships of war, as he had as much at stake as the white man, how wide was the prejudice, how deep rooted was the objection! It was said of him, "he won't fight; he is a passive and cowering creature, accustomed to cringe and submit; he has no fighting qualities, no nerve and bravery to meet the perils of the battle-field, and white soldiers will not be willing to fight by his side." Yet how are all these opinions fast dissolving away like a vapor, before the stern, hard facts of some of our recent battles, where this despised race have been assigned the post of greatest danger, and acquitted themselves most nobly! Truly did the Latins say, "*Tempora mutantur, et mutamur*," times change and we change with them. Our old dogmas and opinions are giving way. We know but little; we are coming to know more, and we have a good teacher in the providences of God. Let us be willing to sit at His feet and learn. I should not be surprised if God has much to teach us on the subject of this much abused race. I should not be surprised if God intends to give this race a prominent part to act in our great national drama—to give them such a position of prominence and usefulness, as to call forth the nation's admiration and gratitude.

In all these providences, it seems to me that I can see the shadow of coming events, the earnest of a reconstruction of our whole social fabric, and not unlikely on the principle of that grand truth, proclaimed to the world by our fathers in their Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

If this is to be so—if God is to bring this order out of the present confusion, which we all must ardently hope, then I look for glorious things to be done for Africa. I have said that the natural home of the negro is not on this continent. I do not say this, because I have any prejudice against him, or any objection to his having a permanent home and equal rights among us, if he desires to stay with us under all the disadvantages of his position. God's government over the world has always been a "wheel within a wheel"—an overturning and overruling for some great end. In His government there is also a principle of compensation—a compensation that comes sooner or later as the result of things borne and suffered. If this compensation is due any where in this world, it seems to me that it is due to Africa and from Christian America. I apprehend that the time will come when we shall acknowledge this debt and begin to pay it. When this war is over and society settles down on the principles of this new construction, then I think there will commence a movement, partly missionary and partly civil and commercial, a tide of emigration in Africa's sable sons toward the land of their fathers, carrying with them all the humanizing institutions of an enlightened christian civilization. Long has *Ethiopia stretched forth her hands unto God*, in the character of her own heathenism and in the wrongs she has suffered, and for aught we know, God may be answering her prayers in the present upheaving of our nation.

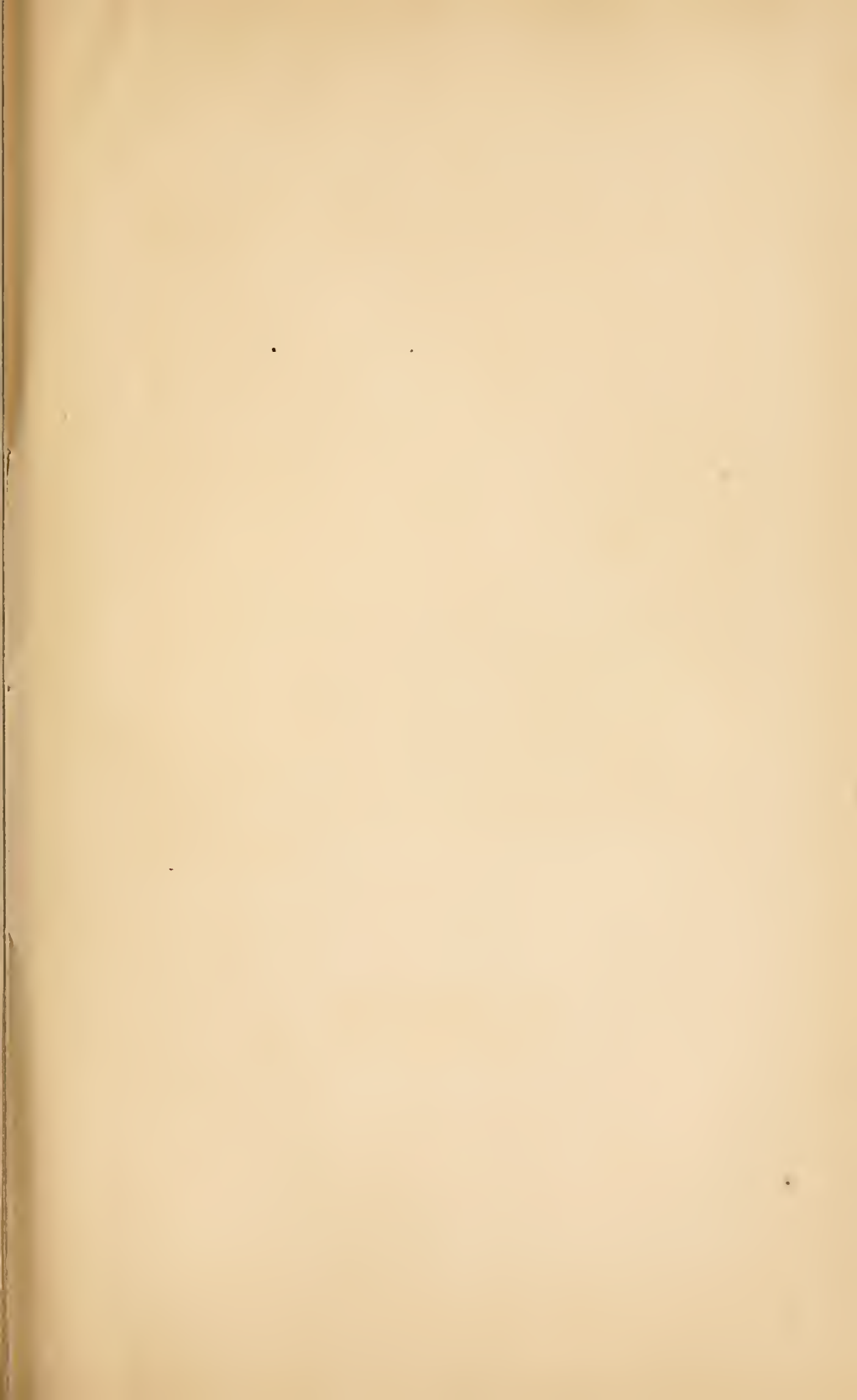
As for the future of our own nation, it seems to me that God has in store for us greater blessings and a higher position than we have ever enjoyed. I say not this in the spirit of pride and power, but as my reading of the great principles of God's righteous government in connexion with passing providences. It may be that, as a nation, we have outlived our day of grace—that God *has weighed us in the balances and found us wanting*. It may be that He will let loose against us

so many foreign elements as to crush us; and it may be that these very elements are to be the means of our greater union and efficiency of action. Under all the circumstances of our past successes and our present position, I am hopeful, more than hopeful, of complete final success. I cannot but look upon the late splendid victories, which are the occasion of this day of thanksgiving, as a Divine pledge in our favor. When I look and see what there was to be done, and what has already been done—when I consider how utterly unprepared we were at the beginning of this civil contest, and how formidable is the array at present, with the ample resources of the country behind—when I see how the public mind is rapidly drifting into views more and more in accordance with Bible principles; and especially when I consider that God is on the throne, and remember that Jefferson said *that the Almighty had no attribute which could take side with slavery against freedom*, I have a strong confidence that the Lord is on our side, and that when he has sufficiently chastised us and humbled us, and brought us to repentance and to the abandonment of our sins, then He will give us peace and prosperity; and that the glory of the latter house will be greater than the former. Let us then be thankful and hopeful—thankful for the past and hopeful for the future.

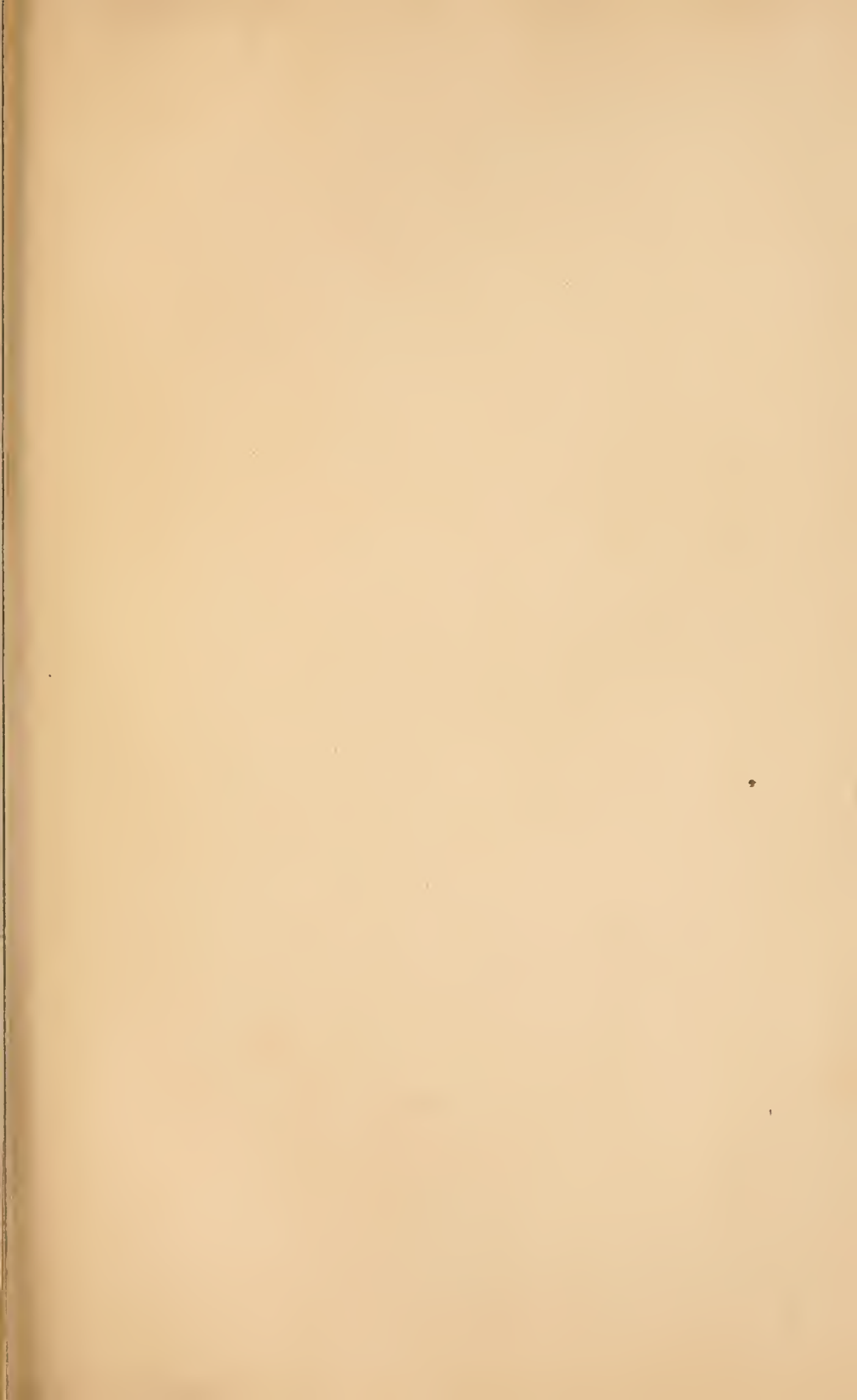












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